Opening of Post Offices in Villages of Himachal Pradesh

*168 SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 1258 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 14th December, 1999 and state;

(a) whether the norms and formalities to open Branch Post Offices in the villages of Himachal Pradesh during the year 1999-2000 have since been completed; and

(b) if so, the details of the villages where such Post Offices will start functioning from March, 2000 and the details of leftover places alongwith the reasons for delay?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

The norms and formalities to open 7 Extra Departmental Branch Post Offices in the villages of Himachal Pradesh during the year 1999-2000 have since been completed.

(b) An Extra Departmental Branch Post Office has been opened at Village Mair, District.Hamirpur on 29.1.2000 by redeployment of Extra Department post. The following Extra Departmental Post Offices have not yet been opened since the sanctioning of posts of Extra Departmental Branch Post Masters from the Ministry of Finance is awaited. These Brach Post Offices will be opened before 31.3.2000 subject to the sanction of posts of Extra Departmental Branch Post Masters.

(i) Rakkar, Distt. Kangra

(ii) Dhaniri, Distt. Kangra

(iii) Nanhar, Distt. Kangra

(iv) Badukhar, Distt. Kangra

(v) Jhanjhiani, Distt. Hamirpur

(vi) Khuthrin, Distt. Hamirpur

Holding of Court Proceedings in Baroda Jail

*169. SHRI SHIBU SOREN: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Chief Judicial Magistrate of Baroda (Gujarat) has decided to hold the court in the Jail's Open air theatre for quick trial and disposal of petty offenders;

(b) if so, the details in this regard;

(c) whether Government are contemplating to take the same steps in other parts of the country for the quick disposal of large number of pending cases;

(d) if so, the details thereof and by when the steps are likely to be taken; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Chief Judicial Magistrate of Baroda (Gujarat) is holding the court, once in a week, in the Jail premises.

(c) to (e) The Chief Justice of India (CJI), vide his letter dated 19.11.1999, has impressed upon all the Chief Justices of High Courts that every Chief Metropolitan or the Chief Judicial Magistrate of the area, in which a District jail falls may hold his court once or twice in a month, depending upon the workload, in jail to take up the cases of those undertrial prisoners who are involved in petty offences and are keen to confess their guilt. The CJI has further suggested that "Legal Aid Counsel" may be deputed in jails to help such prisoners and move applications on their behalf on the basis of which the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate or the Chief Judicial Magistrate may direct the investigating agency to expedite the filing of the policy report.

In pursuance of the orders passed on 13.10.1999 and 7.12.1999 by the Supreme Court of India, in the case—R.D. Upadhyay *Vs* State of Andhra Pradesh & Others, the Central Government has also written to all the state Government and UT Administrations to take urgent necessary steps for expeditious disposal of cases of undertrials who are languishing in various jails in the country.

Most of the State Governments have also appointed Special Judicial/ Metropolitan Magistrates for the disposal of petty criminal cases, including traffic cases.

Upgradation of Guwahati Airport

* 170. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:—

(a) the implementation status of upgrading Guwahati GNB Airport as International Airport on per PM's special package for the NE and when it is likely to be operative for International Flight;